FROM: Message Media
P.O. Box 9007
Berkeley CA 94709 USA

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8 U.S. ANTARCTIC TREATY 1961-1971 32978

First Class

To:

Express Ads

ALWAYS WANT railroad china, linen, silver, etc., for my private collection. Also wax sealers, dater dies, and anything from the 20th Century Limited. I have a few select PRR and NYC calendars for sale and trade. Write: R. B. Shull, 130 W. 44th St., New York City, NY 10036.

WANTED: Railroad dining car silverware, china, glassware, serving pieces, trays, etc. Buy only, no trades. No menus. S. Schiechl, 25 Cervantes Blvd, San Francisco, CA 94123.

RAILROAD ENTHUSIASTS, Inc., Divisions in Portland, Maine; Boston, Mass.; Hartford, Conn.; New York, N. Y.; Laurel, Maryland; and St. Louis, Missouri. For information on meetings, programs and rail excursions sponsored by these Divisions, contact: R.R.E., P. O. Box 136-RT, Ward Hill, Mass., 01830.

Railroad Enthusiasts, Inc., Boston Division will sponsor a trip over the Boston and Maine Railroad to Lincoln, New Hampshire October 16, 1971, with a side trip over Clarke's steam-operated White Mountain Central.

Coming in December: Excursion over the two-foot steam-operated Edaville Railroad in South Carver, Mass. For information on these trips, write: R.R.E., P.O. Box 136-RT, Ward Hill, Mass. 01830.

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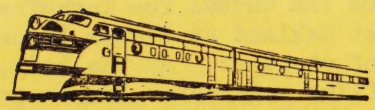
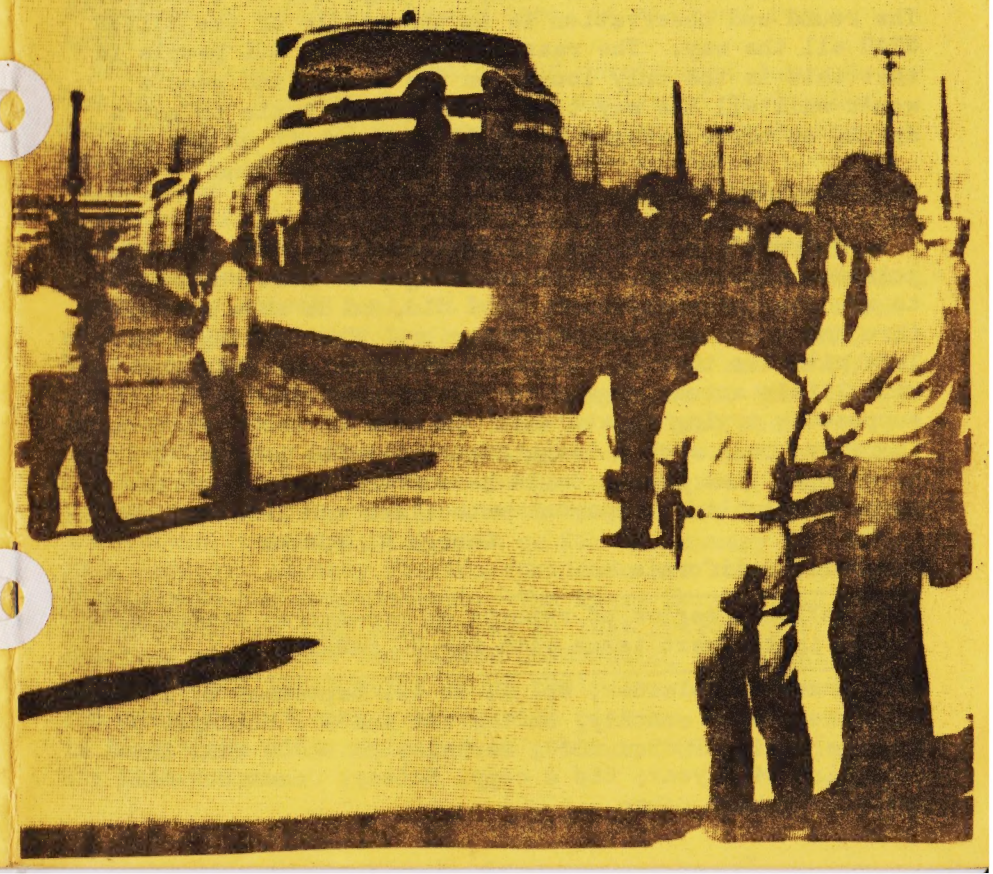


Vol. 1 No. 19
September 6, 1971

newsletter



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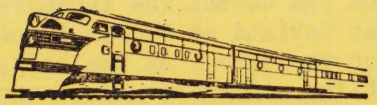

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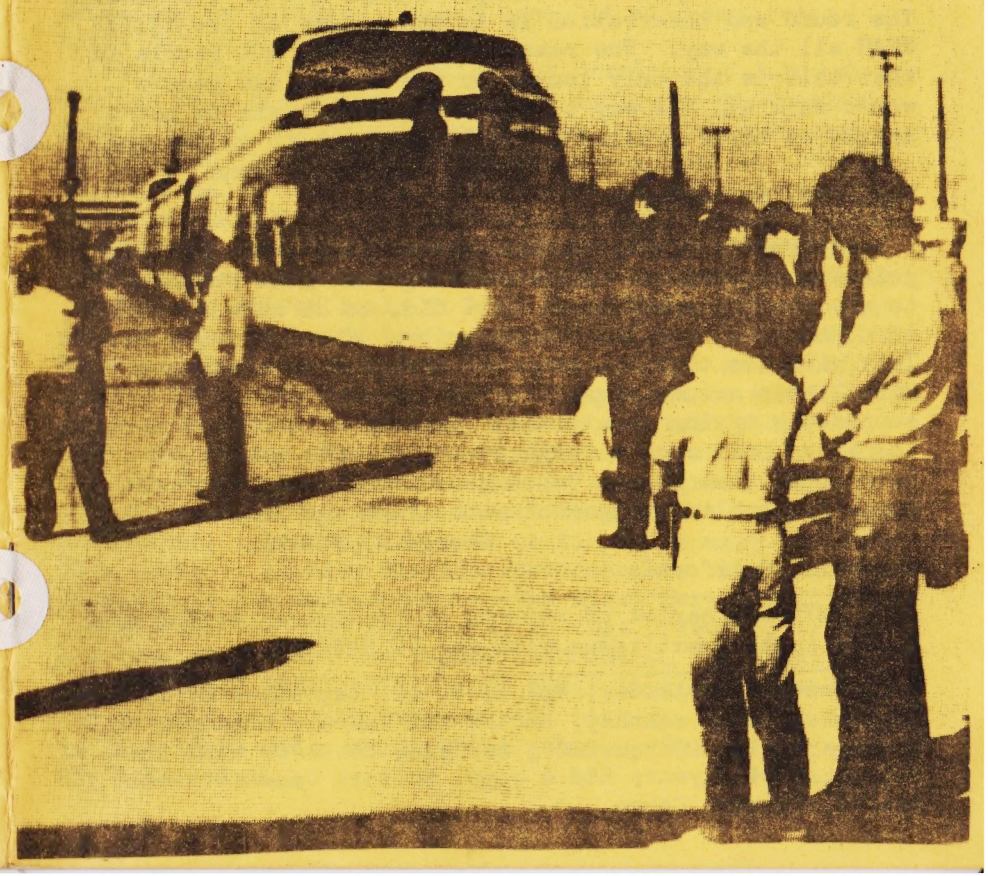


ON THE COVER: The TurboTrain on its nationwide tour rests at Oakland at 5:00pm August 26, as it opens for 3 hours of visitors. At the left, a KTTV, Oakland, cameraman films newscaster Don Knapp as he describes the train. Photo by Message Media.

LETTERS

I just read Paul Rayton's article on the SILVER STAR and thought I would bring you up to date. I have just finished riding the SILVER STAR, SILVER METEOR and the SOUTHWIND up and back to New York. There is no more switching at Jacksonville since Amtrak took over. All switching is done at Auburndale Junction (not a passenger stop) which is south of Orlando and north of Winter Haven. All NY-Fla and Chicago-Fla trains come straight through Jacksonville and are split at Auburndale with one coach and sleeper going to Tampa-St. Pete and the rest continuing to Miami (except the CHAMPION which all goes to Tampa-St. Pete. Of course the reverse is true northbound. The SOUTHWIND carries a dome sleeper 3 days out of 4 each way. The round end observation is in the middle of the SILVER STAR all the way. The reason given by the SCL people is that this is the only lounge on the train, and people won't walk all the way to the end of the train to get a drink, so their revenue drops if they put it on the end.

Dr. Charles A. Dunn

Coral Gables, Florida

TurboTrain's visit, in San Jose at least, was a disappointing experience. I am assuming that most who came to see the train expected, as I did, to be able to walk thru the train and see its interior. The feeling I was left with was that the tour was designed as a big show with little actual regard for the general public it was supposedly trying to attract. In view of the fact that there had been such a large turnout by the public, I'd have hoped that Amtrak could have found a way to reinforce the public's apparent enthusiasm and interest...

George A. Muench

Campbell, California

PAUL RAYTON'S series of reports on pre-Amtrak trains will resume in the next issue with the IC HAWKEYE.

Rail Travel Newsletter, Vol 1, No 19, September 6, 1971. Published twice monthly, on the 1st and 3rd Mondays, by Message Media, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709 USA. Subscription $4 a year; 25¢ a copy. Editor: James Russell. Artist: Michael Cohen.

BUBBLE POPS FOR CHAMPAGNE TRAIN

The famed FLORIDA SPECIAL which began over 82 years ago to run between New York and Florida in the Winter travel season, most recently under the direction of the merged Seaboard Coast Line, has been cancelled. Amtrak announced August 11 that the train will not be reinstated this coming Winter.

The train was said to be SCL's big money-maker, and drew more publicity than most other passenger trains in the last pre-Amtrak days. In large part this was due to SCL's policy of advertising the streamliner when most other railroads had long given up aggressively promoting their passenger runs. The train was famous for its candlelight champagne dinners, its on-board TV, bingo games, fashion shows, and other imaginative innovations to draw the public to the overnight run.

Will Amtrak offer something to replace the holiday run? The answer to that question is not yet clear. Amtrak does plan a similar type of service, but has not yet announced schedules or details. In any case, it will not run a train called FLORIDA SPECIAL.

Amtrak director of marketing and development James McClellan made the announcement. He indicated that extra cars would be put on existing trains during the Winter season, and there will be candlelight—Amtrak is ordering 10,000 candles—and free drinks. But as for the service that the FLORIDA SPECIAL made famous, McClellan poo-pooed it, saying, "The things they did were not so great. They just compared well to what was offered on the other trains."

Evidently Amtrak feels it will be offering fine service even without the name train. McClellan said the SILVER STAR will operate on about the same schedule as the FLORIDA SPECIAL. "We plan to run a train equal to the SPECIAL and I hope better in quality than we had last year."

But Amtrak may have made a big booboo in casually killing the famous name, because people put a great deal of reliance on names. And in a society with few lengthy traditions, a name dating back as far as January 9, 1888, is a rarity. Already Florida spokesmen are reacting strongly to the announcement. The Miami Herald said that the SPECIAL "is dead and buried in that graveyard of the American mind where the WABASH CANNONBALL, the HIAWATHA and the NANCY HANKS still sound their lonesome whistles." The message that many readers will pick up, true or not, is that there will no longer be a luxury Winter train on the East Coast.

MORE ON THE TURBOTRAIN TOUR

When we last left the TurboTrain, it was pulling out of Oakland, right on time, and heading for the Pacific Northwest. As it zipped thru Berkeley at 8:10am on August 27, its high-pitched, dissonant horns piercing the foggy air, a surprisingly large number of people had gathered along the SP right-of-way to catch a view of the red, white and black 3-car train. Viewers were impressed with how quietly it moved along, not only for the quietness of its turbine engines, but for the relative silence of its few wheels on the rails.

All was going well then, but that night, as the train headed along the Cascade route towards Oregon, it appeared to run out of fuel, and stopped dead. The incident occurred north of Mt. Shasta, about 85 miles south of the Oregon border. Two SP freight trains waited behind it. The special fuel it requires was trucked to the scene, but the engines would not start. A diesel engine was required to tow it to Eugene, Oregon for repairs (the rumor was that a faulty fuel pump caused the trouble), and 300 or so people waiting in Klamath Falls for a look at the train missed it.

We received further reports on the problem at San Jose, where police kept the crowd at a distance from the Turbo. One report said around 1000 people had gathered, and the belief was that they would be able to enter the train. It arrived 20 mins late, and at a good distance from the police barricade. As soon as it was evident that no one could board, the crowd began to leave. Thus it seemed that accurate information about the visit had not been made available.

It had been a quite different story in Florida, where the Turbo could be ridden free by anyone showing up at station stops, as long as there was room. Riders could ride in the front dome if they wished. For those riding only a short distance, SCL provided buses for the return trip. It was possible to ride round trip the length of the state (Jacksonville-Tampa-Miami-Jacksonville).

The Turbo is due back in Providence on September 9.

BOMB ON SP COMMUTE LINE

A terrorist bomb exploded on a trestle over Quint St., San Francisco, shortly after midnight on Sept. 7, doing minor damage and requiring a 20mph slow order to be posted. A commute train had passed by shortly before.

AMTRAK VS. SANTA FE

The following is an interview between our Paul Rayton and an "inside" employee of the Santa Fe Railway, who now finds himself working under Amtrak. To protect the sources, we are not publishing any other names.

Q. Mr. W., how would you describe train travel this Summer?

A. Well, I'd say it's becoming less pleasurable, generally. They (Amtrak) keep cutting back everywhere.

Q. I've noticed that too. I've mentioned to you before my great difficulty in getting bedroom space on the SUPER CHIEF from Chicago to Los Angeles recently. Do you have any comment on that?

A. Well, the comparison pretty much speaks for itself. Last Summer we ran a longer SUPER CHIEF/EL CAPITAN--besides being in competition with two other trains on the same route. Today our average consist--and get this--for the peak period of Summer travel, we have all of 5 regularly assigned sleeping cars. Total! For coaches, we'll have 6, sometimes 7. Of course these hi-level coaches seat 72 each, so with 7 coaches in the consist we have a capacity of over 500 passengers.

Q. Why are there only 5 sleepers now assigned daily?

A. This isn't really my area of specialty, so I couldn't conjecture about the numbers. I do know that they certainly had the equipment if they felt like using it. You know how we used to run separate trains in peak periods, don't you? First the SUPER would go out with 7 or 8 or more sleeping cars. Then 10 minutes later the EL CAP would follow, with its 7 or 8 or even 9 coaches. We had a real passenger capacity then. The point, of course, is that this tailoring capacity to crowds wasn't 10 years ago, it was less than 8 months ago. We did it at Christmas as well as in the Summer. I don't think that they now want to take the trouble to make an effort to cope with the peak demands.

Q. So with all that "competition" gone, you must be operating at very near to capacity?

A. Frankly, I haven't ridden a full train yet. Every morning as I walk through the train I sort of count the passengers, and there are invariably many empty seats. Of course, it's harder to know about the sleeping cars since all the room doors are closed. I don't think we have as many passengers as last year, even with all that competition gone. But we still carry a lot of people on the EL CAP.

Q. Can you give me any approximation?

A. We've been carrying, at a minimum, 400 coach passengers every day during the Summer. It's hard to predict, tho. We usually know about a day or two ahead of time what sort of load to expect. When we arrive in L.A. from Chicago we know the expected load for the next night, when we go out again. On one recent trip I know of, for example, there was a load of 450.

Q. With 450 people to feed, you must have quite a crew in the dining car.

A. That brings me to my real sore point with Amtrak, for here is where they're cutting back even more. The results are more angry passengers, more lost checks (i.e., people ducking out without paying), and poorer service all around. On that load of 450, for instance, it happened to be a weekend night and the train went out with a "short" crew, which is to say just 4 waiters.

Q. Can you put "short crew" in perspective?

A. A normal full crew, starting this month (August) is now set as 5 waiters. But you have to go back

a year to really see the cutbacks. Last Summer, when the Santa Fe alone ran the EL CAP we always had a crew made up as follows: 6 waiters, 2 stewards, 2 pantry men, 1 chef, 1 second cook, 1 third cook, 2 fourth cooks ("dishwashers"), 1 lounge car attendant, 1 bar man, and 2 men in the lower level "Kachina Room Coffee Shop." This Summer we started out as before and things were all right until this month—August—when the traveling gets heaviest. Now they cut the crew back so that a full crew is: 5 waiters, 1 steward (plus a part time steward who goes out if they think there'll be a heavy load at lunch or something. How can you judge whether 450 people will be hungry tomorrow at suppertime or not? And if they are, what if the "part time man" is still waiting in Los Angeles?), 1 pantry man, 1 chef, 1 second cook, 1 third cook, 1 fourth cook, 1 bar man, and 1 man in the Kachina Room. That's it. We've lost 6 men from the crew.

Q. What is a pantry man?

A. He works downstairs near the kitchen. He makes salads and calls the orders in to the chef and his helpers. He facilitates greatly in getting the meals cooked to order and seeing that they are served with the desired vegetables and so forth.

Q. Does it actually get that crowded that you need men for that?

A. We have a maximum capacity of 72 seats in the dining car. In the mornings and evenings we have every one of those seats filled, with more people waiting in lines. If you've ever watched a small cafe, you'll see that at busy times waiters or waitresses can get pretty rushed with just 8 or 9 seats to tend—and they usually shout their orders to the cook. Multiply that scene by 9 and you can see where we need all the help we can get. When we go out with 4 waiters working we have, when the diner is full, one waiter for every 18 people! Then people wonder why we are sometimes slow with their order. And now with only 1 fourth cook we're even having trouble keeping adequate dishes clean to serve on! Just think of the number of dishes involved in serving one person which have to be washed. Ever washed dishes for 72 or more?

Q. The hi-level diners are perhaps unique, aren't they—because they're sort of like a "twin-unit" diner, except that it's built into a single car?

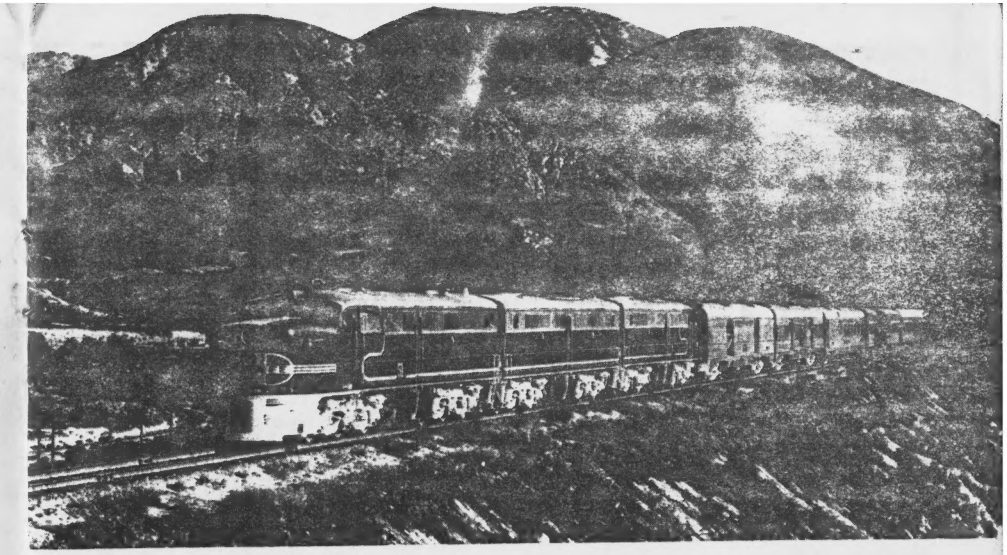
A. That's right—and if it's acknowledged that we are unusual, we should be afforded the opportunity to maintain the standards we tried to keep in years gone by. We're still a "budget" operation, compared with the SUPER. I mean, we use paper placemats, and plastic cups for drinking water, but still we've tried to keep serving good food at reasonable prices. The cutbacks in the crew size are making it harder than ever to provide service, in addition to the other problems I mentioned.

Q. Was the dining car crew change the only crew cutback?

A. They're also in the process of phasing out all the Registered Nurses we had working. As you may know, under Santa Fe our "Courier-Nurse" was a fully qualified Nurse who acted as a "hostess" and also assisted mothers traveling with young children and helped anybody who didn't feel well or needed some assistance. No more Nurses will be hired. The only requirement now will be to have a "pretty face."

Q. Somehow it seems that Amtrak is dropping many of the features of the train that might have appealed to family travel.

A. I'd agree with that, and for other reasons too. I don't work in the yards, but I do know from personal experience that we're having mechanical problems that we never used to have. I don't know if Amtrak laid off yard workers or what, but for example on one recent trip on the EL CAPITAN we had a consist of 7 coaches. No less than four of those coaches had non-functioning "automatic" doors. Four out of 7 is not a very good average! It wouldn't be so bad except, well,



those sliding doors are fine when they work (and they used to be exceptionally reliable) but when they are "down" they are really hard to open. All the older people had a hard time trying to get to the dining car. Besides that, we've had more air conditioning failures this Summer than we've ever had before. We've even had hot cars as we've been standing in the station ready to originate trips. One sleeping car—and I'm not kidding—had the heat on, and this was in July. Passengers refused to get into that one, I heard, so a different car was switched in (a rare occurrence, I might add). And I heard that the replacement car later developed flat wheels and had to be changed again in Kansas City!

Q. Events of this nature were far less frequent last year when just the Santa Fe was responsible for the operation of these trains. Do you know if these "economy" measures were instituted by Amtrak?

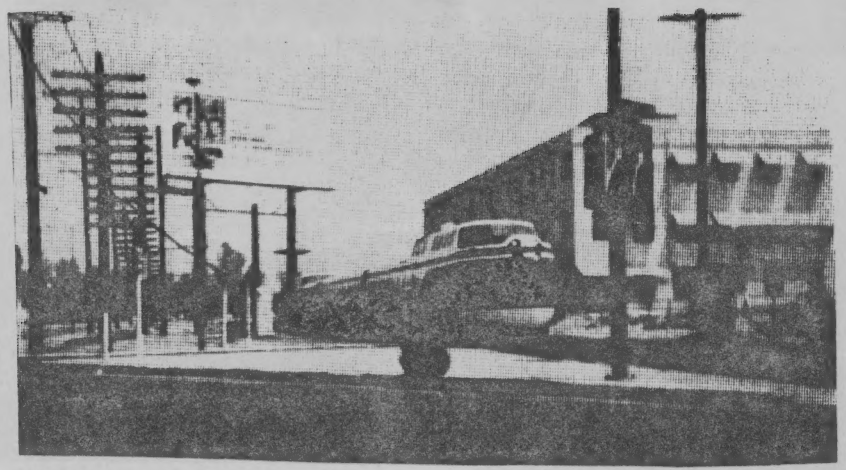
A. Amtrak? Hah! I have yet to see an "Amtrak official". We have better communications with Red China than with Amtrak! We had one "Passenger Agent" on board one time, and he walked up and down asking people how they liked the ride and all that sort of stuff. And we had one of the hot cars that day. You should have seen how he avoided that car! Of course in recent years tales of mechanical breakdowns and so on on trains have been almost commonplace, but I really feel that, from that standpoint at least, the Santa Fe had some of the best-maintained equipment on the road.

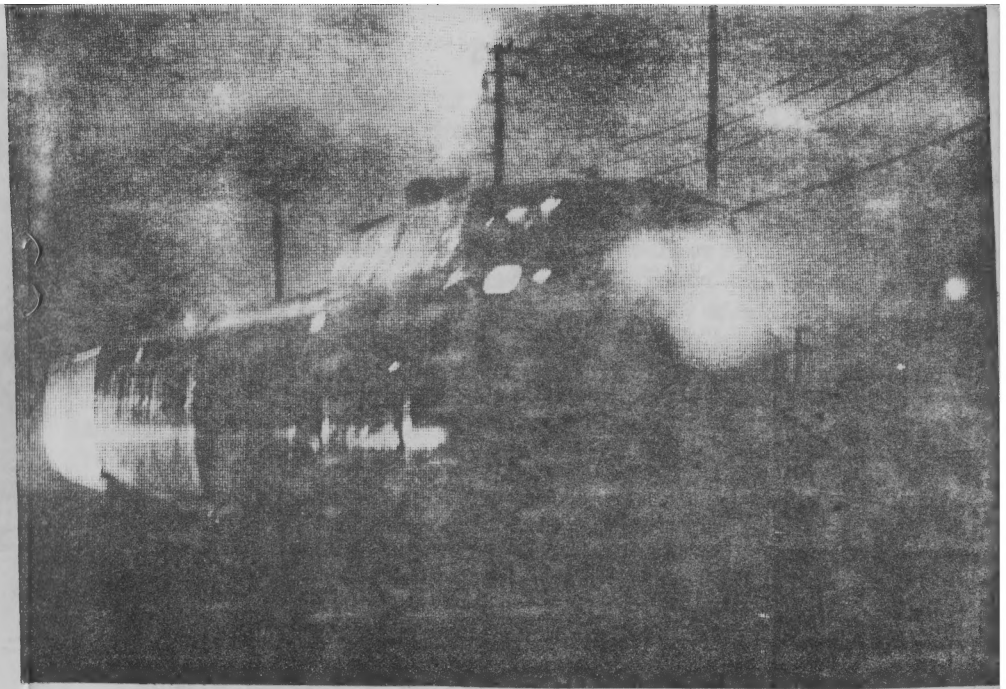
Q. I'd have to agree with you. I think that I have ridden on the EL CAP (in pre-Amtrak days) on easily 35 different occasions, probably more. I can only recall one instance of a hot car, and that was a lounge. I've personally seen two hot cars with last-minute air conditioning breakdowns in the last couple of months.

A. All these changes, don't forget, are being brought to you by the people who are "making the trains worth riding again." They are cheapening the appearance of this train with their economy measures and before they are through you'll not recognize our proud heritage (if I may say that) of Santa Fe service. You know they've already re-issued the little brochure that we used to give out to all the passengers. We had one specifically for the EL CAP and a different one for the SUPER. Now we have just one brochure, with the imagination-stimulating name of "TRAIN # 17 & 18." If this is a preview, I fear for the future.

Q. Thank you for speaking with us.

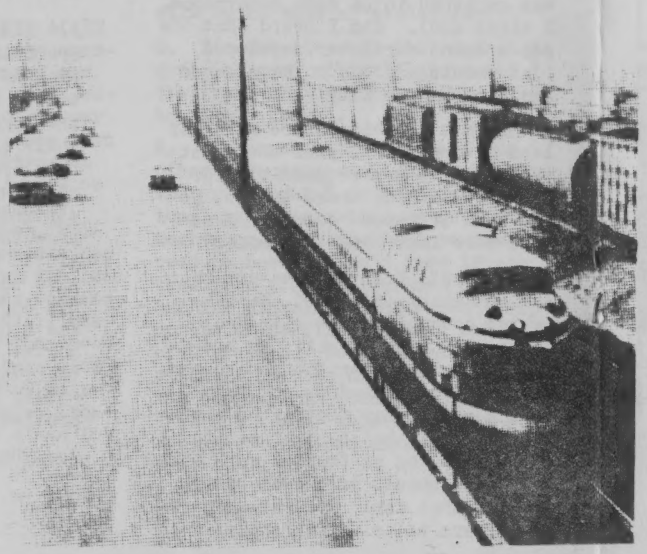
TURBOTRAIN COMES TO CALIFORNIA





(Above) The Turbo approaches Los Angeles; seen here running beside city streets between Alhambra and L.A. (Below) Pulling out of L.A. smog, the Turbo heads north on the morning of August 25. Taylor yard is seen in the background, as the train parallels a highway in L.A. (Upper right) After-dark arrival of the Turbo at the 16th Street station in Oakland August 25. The train pulled in at 8:15, 15 minutes late. Immediately behind it was the Coast Daylight-Cascade, running on time. Crowds saw it here for ten minutes before it moved into the yards to rest until 5:00 pm the next day.

(Lower right) It is now 5:00pm the next day (August 26), and the train is just opening for 3 hours of visitors. This is the same general scene shown on the front cover. The policeman is an SP employee. (Oakland pictures by Message Media; L.A. pictures by Gregory Marlowe.)



Mixed Train of Thoughts

METROLINER seats are beginning to show wear, reports recent rider. Also highly touted phones were found inoperable and bathrooms in smelly condition. Metro Club car attendant wore a jacket that was wrinkled beyond description... AMTRAK'S OCTOBER schedule, the third to appear, will reveal train number changes for most of the trains still running. Number 1 position goes to--guess which one?--the SUNSET, still to be trains 1 and 2. Right now Amtrak has umpteen train no. 1's. Other changes on SP routes: CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO will become no. 5/6; CASCADE will go from 11/12 to 20/21. Aim is to have no duplication of numbers around the nation, something Amtrak should have done May 1... EQUIPMENT SHUFFLING continues at a heightened pace. Latest info is that West Coast trains will be made up mostly of Santa Fe equipment, and likewise the SUNSET. Equipment from the latter is going into SCL runs. And conversely, SCL diners--3 of them--are due to come west to replace the automat cars on the COAST DAYLIGHT. September 2 the CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO deadheaded a "Pride of Texas" combo diner-lounge from the SUNSET eastward... F UNITS are at last replacing those ungainly SDP45's on the West Coast trains. Only a pair of the latter remain. About September 6 the CASCADE began using the covered wagons. And its on-time performance hasn't been helped any, either. Sept. 8 it was 1 hr 50 mins late northbd out of Oakland, mostly due to trouble with the F's... ANOTHER RUMOR about equipment changes is that cars off the POCAHONTAS will be moving west, as will SCL lounges... ACTIVELY CRUSADING for more rail use, less highway, is the Delaware Valley Citizens Committee for Better Transportation (Box 429, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010). A Labor Day project was distributing flyers urging people to "leave the car home" and "take the train." Flyer featured the train-and-highway cartoon from back cover of RTN no. 14... AND it will come as no surprise that Labor Day traffic deaths totalled 615, with California tops at 73--more than the previous Labor Day weekend record of 67 in 1969... MEANWHILE, Caterpillar Tractor continues to buy expensive full-color magazine pages to try to convince us that the more freeways built, the more lives we save. It never ceases to amaze how you can lie with statistics... RALPH NADER'S recent blast at California land management criticized SP, the state's largest landholder. Conclusion of the raiders: the railroad should give back its land grants to the people...

To be continued

COMMUTING AND RAPID TRANSIT

Subways Connected By New Passageway

Every day 6500 N.Y. subway riders transferring between the IRT Flushing 5th Ave. line and the IND 42nd St. station on Avenue of the Americas have had to emerge onto 42nd St. and walk outdoors to the other station. Now, with the opening Aug. 31 of a 450-ft underground passageway between the two, access is easier. The passage runs under Bryant Park and was 2 yrs in the making. The brightly lit tunnel, decorated with murals, is open 24 hours.

Transportation Bonds An Issue in New York

Next November New York voters will decide on a $2.5-billion transportation bond issue. This month, a committee set up by Mayor Lindsay will hold public hearings on this and other matters. One question the committee will ask is why, with the funds from a similar issue in 1967, 92% of the money allocated for highways has been spent already, while only 16% of the mass transit money has been used.

Tour of Russian Transit Facilities Reported

Railfan Harre Demoro has returned from his Russian tour and reports on transportation there in a series of articles in the Oakland Tribune, which began Aug. 29. Demoro says that streetcars and trolley buses play a large role in city and interurban commuting, and the Russian plan is to continue improving them.

New Delays for BART System Cars

A recent estimate for the first running of the long-delayed Bay Area Rapid Transit system was next January. Now that's been extended to next Spring. There have been problems with the 10 Rohr-built prototype cars, mostly traceable to sub-contractor Westinghouse Electric. Transbay service still is expected to begin in November 1972.

Calcutta Will Have A Subway

Calcutta is the latest large city to announce plans for a subway. Relying on Russian knowhow, the congested Indian city hopes to have a 10-mile system going by 1978.

Boeing Will Design A Transit System

The DOT announced last month that Boeing Co. will design an experimental automated system at West Virginia University, and plans are that it will be running one year from now.

QUOTES OF THE WEEK ***

"It seems to me that the invention of the railroad represented unalloyed, absolute progress, for it bound remote areas together, made industrial growth possible, and provided a needed convenience at minimal cost. Its negative features were few (land manipulation, coal soot and noise) and were correctible (by better laws and the further invention of the electric train). The railroad benefited all men and all nations and represented creative inventiveness at its best."

—James A. Michener, N.Y. Times, Sep. 5

"Amtrak people want to give you good service. Try them. Tell them what you want. And don't hesitate to make suggestions. ... Our aim is to serve you. Dependably and courteously, of course. But also with understanding. And vision. Count on us. There's no limit on how far we'll go to give you a better trip."

—From a new Amtrak publicity pamphlet

"It looks like a DC 9 without wings. It's a very sexy vehicle, a real beauty with domes, and turbine-powered."

—James McClellan, Amtrak director of marketing and development, describing the TurboTrain

A STEAM MULTI-MEDIA TRIP

By George Hyko

A simple, quiet Saturday afternoon, relaxing from the week's work. One of those lovely late-Summer Bay Area days when the gentle sun warms the golden hills and the cool sea breeze tingles your skin and wafts scents of salt and seaweed about.

Could anything be nicer than just sitting or lying in this natural environment? Yes, something could, I found while roaming Tilden Regional Park in the Oakland-Berkeley hills. The tiny steam train run by the Redwood Valley Railway offers sensual delights unanticipated until experienced. A 12-minute, 20¢ ride on the inappropriately named little line—it's actually perched on a hillside among pines and eucalyptus—stimulates all the senses and heightens the natural delights of the area.

Sprawled in an open wooden car, you simultaneously experience the tactile and aural sensations from wheels squealing and clicking on track, the sound of the steam whistle blowing for mock grade crossings, the puff-puff

of the little engine. You inhale the occasional fragrance of coal smoke—technically it's air pollution, but to me it smells nice—and unexpectedly the scents of the green-gold surrounding hills are enhanced: pungent eucalyptus, pine fragrances, the characteristic chaparral perfumes. Then there's the sense of motion, of effortless motion, with movement both rhythmic and arhythmic. And finally, it seems, besides the visual pleasures of the changing aspects of woods and hills as you curve about in a huge figure eight via cuts, bridges and a tunnel, from two separate vantage points you view a vista unrivalled by few Class One railroads, that of San Francisco Bay spread out before you beyond rolling hills and drifts of fog.

Little wonder a steady stream of riders, young and old, appear, ride, and leave with satisfied smiles on their faces. There's something mysterious about the attraction of steam, and of rattling through the countryside at a leisurely pace, that no super-powered car on a superhighway can begin to replace. It's a multi-media attraction in which all your senses are caught up and stimulated at once in a strangely satisfying way.

EDITORIAL

The smog season has descended upon California. Thick brown stuff obscures the Golden Gate bridge—a view the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce will never publish in its tourist brochures.

Here is a checklist of a few things you can do about smog, which you may not have thought of.

1. Learn the facts about the physiological effects of smog upon your own body. Few outside the experts know all the gory details. This will motivate you to do more about this pernicious problem.
2. Be certain those you know can really identify smog. Most people in this country have been reared in air pollution and don't recognize it as something other than a natural condition, like the haze of Autumn.
3. When you know it's smoggy, don't operate your car unless it's absolutely essential. Remember the slogan from World War II—is this trip really necessary?
4. Boycott tourist areas that have bad smog. This will both help you and help get smog controlled if you write to officials of the areas and tell them what you're doing.
5. Keep pressuring your local air pollution control agency to do more about controlling smog.
6. Take the train to a fresh-air resort and breathe deeply.